

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 AMMAN 003503

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

DEPT FOR PRM AND NEA, GENEVA FOR RMA, DHS FOR CIS, ATHENS
AND ROME FOR DHS/CIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PREF](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [IR](#) [IZ](#) [JO](#)

SUBJECT: UNHCR AGAIN PUSHES FOR RESETTLEMENT OF IRANIAN
KURDS FROM NO-MAN'S LAND CAMP ON JORDANIAN-IRAQI BORDER

REF: A. GENEVA 1129

[1](#)B. BRATTAIN/POLASCHIK E-MAIL OF APRIL 29

[1](#)C. BRATTAIN/CAMPBELL E-MAIL OF APRIL 13

[1](#)1. (SBU) Summary and Action Request: During a May 4 briefing, UNHCR urged resettlement countries to consider for resettlement the 1,047 Iranian Kurds who fled Iraq's Al Tash refugee camp in April 2003 and have remained camped on the Iraqi-Jordanian border ever since. UNHCR presented specific cases with family links to resettlement countries, the vast majority with links to Sweden and just two families with distant ties to the U.S. UNHCR argued that third-country resettlement was the only option for this group and particularly important for long-term asylum policies in Jordan. However, UNHCR also acknowledged that resettlement from the no-man's land camp could create a pull factor and undermine local integration efforts underway in northern Iraq. None of the resettlement countries present at the briefing made any commitment to consider the refugees, promising only to review the files and consult with capitals.

The Netherlands, Norway and Finland said they would be unable to consider these refugees at this time. As instructed ref b, we will share the two cases with family ties to the U.S. with DHS Officer Todd Gardner during his May 11-16 circuit ride. While we continue to have concerns about the broader regional implications of this resettlement exercise, we also recognize that third country resettlement is the only viable solution for this group. We request Department's guidance on how to respond to UNHCR before May [1](#)15. End summary and action request.

[1](#)2. (U) As a follow-on to a briefing of resettlement countries in Geneva (ref a), UNHCR shared specific Iranian Kurdish refugee cases with representatives of resettlement countries on May 4. While UNHCR has prepared a group referral for nearly the entire no-man's land caseload (1,047 Iranian Kurds), it has broken down the group according to family ties to resettlement countries. The vast majority of refugees has family ties to Sweden, with smaller numbers linked to Norway, Denmark, Finland, Canada, Australia, the U.K., the U.S. (two cases only, a total of 16 individuals) and Ireland. An additional 16 cases do not have family links in any resettlement countries. All of these resettlement countries, except Denmark and Ireland, were present at the briefing. UNHCR asked for feedback from resettlement countries by May 15. UNHCR was represented by Jordan Representative Sten Bronee and his senior protection and resettlement officers, as well as Geneva-based Senior Resettlement Consultant Phyllis Coven. UNHCR's Iraq mission (currently based in UNHCR's Jordan Branch Office) did not participate in the briefing.

[1](#)3. (U) Bronee reviewed UNHCR's efforts to profile and prepare the group referral, repeating information shared with resettlement countries on April 16 in Geneva (ref a). The group referral is limited to the 1,047 Iranian Kurdish refugees who fled Iraq's Al Tash refugee camp to the Jordanian border in April 2003 and have remained camped in no-man's land ever since. Since UNHCR began the profiling exercise in September 2003, all Iranian Kurds in no-man's land have been photographed and interviewed. Bronee emphasized that UNHCR is under increasing pressure from the GOJ to find solutions for this caseload and noted that UNHCR's ability to find solutions for this group will affect long-term asylum prospects in Jordan. Without evidence that the international community is willing to resettle non-Palestinian refugees from Jordan, Bronee fears that the GOJ will tighten its borders still further and end its temporary protection policy for the estimated 300,000 Iraqis resident in Jordan. (Comment: We find this last fear a bit overblown. End comment.)

[1](#)4. (U) UNHCR Senior Resettlement Consultant Phyllis Coven elaborated on the modalities of this group referral. UNHCR determined the group profile based on the following six criteria common to all adult members of the group:

- Left Iran in 1979-80 as a result of the Iranian revolution or Iran-Iraq war

- Fled to northern Iraq
- Registered as refugees in Iraq's Al Tash camp from 1987 onwards
- Arrived in no-man's land following the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq
- Registered in no-man's land on September 16, 2003; and
- Photographed on April 6, 2004 in the no-man's land camp.

Based on interviews with adult members of the group, UNHCR has made a preliminary determination that Article 1F of the Refugee Convention does not apply to this group. Separately, Coven noted that between 25 and 35 Iranian Kurdish single males currently resident in no-man's land do not meet the group criteria because they left Al Tash camp for an extended period between 1987 and 2003. UNHCR Senior Protection Officer Jacqueline Parlevliet later confided to refcoord that the agency is concerned that these single men had been involved in paramilitary activities and therefore needed further interviews before any 1F determinations could be made.

15. (U) Drawing on ref c points, refcoord noted U.S. concerns that resettlement from the no-man's land camp could create a pull factor for refugees from throughout Iraq and undermine local integration efforts currently underway for the 1,000 Iranian Kurdish families who relocated from Al Tash camp to northern Iraq during the last year. Bronee acknowledged that resettlement activities on the border -- particularly while unrest continues in southern and western Iraq -- could indeed create a pull factor and that neither UNHCR nor coalition forces would be able to respond appropriately to a new flow of refugees toward Jordan. The GOJ, Bronee predicted, would likely retain its current, de facto closed border policy for refugee arrivals in the event of new refugee flows. Parlevliet added that local integration in northern Iraq could not be considered as a possible solution for the no-man's land camp, as security conditions in Iraq prohibited UNHCR from advocating return to Iraq at this time. Moreover, recent reports from UNHCR's local implementing partner in Sulaimaniyah indicated that the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) was now reviewing its previous pledge to allow the Al Tash Kurds to remain in northern Iraq for at least fifteen years. Without firm commitments from the KRG, she asked, how could local integration in northern Iraq be considered as a durable solution?

16. (U) None of the resettlement countries present at the briefing made any commitment to consider the refugees, promising only to review the files and consult with capitals. Sweden (widely touted by UNHCR as having agreed to process the cases) noted several times that its Immigration Board would only compare the UNHCR lists to its Swedish family reunification lists. The Netherlands, Norway and Finland told UNHCR that they would be unable to consider these refugees at this time. As instructed ref b, refcoord informed UNHCR that will share the two cases with family ties to the U.S. with DHS Officer Todd Gardner during his May 11-16 circuit ride, for informational purposes only. Refcoord also accepted a list of the 16 cases without family ties to any resettlement country, noting that we could not make any commitments regarding those cases.

17. (SBU) Comment and Action Request: UNHCR still does not have good answers for our concerns that a resettlement exercise conducted from no-man's land could create a pull factor for the 4,500 Iranian Kurdish refugees who remain in Al Tash and undermine ongoing local integration efforts for the 1,000 families who moved from Al Tash to northern Iraq during the last year. The absence of any UNHCR/Iraq staff from this briefing only underscored our impression that UNHCR Headquarters is rushing ahead with this group resettlement experiment without having fully considered the consequences for Iranian Kurdish refugee populations throughout the region. Nevertheless, it is clear that this particular group of Iranian Kurdish refugees -- the 1,047 who fled Al Tash in April 2003 and have remained in the no-man's land ever since -- are very unlikely to voluntarily return to Iraq (either Al Tash or the north) and do not have any options for local integration in Jordan. Resettlement outside the region therefore seems to be the only real solution for this group and one that would reassure the GOJ that it will not be expected to accept any new long-term refugee populations. We request Department's guidance on how to respond to UNHCR. Please send guidance to Embassies Amman and Cairo, as well as US Mission Geneva.

18. (U) CPA Baghdad minimize considered.
GNEHM